MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

May 16, 2013

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

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This meeting summary paraphrases individual comments and suggestions from Dinkey Collaborative members. Statements do not indicate consensus of the group unless they are preceded by the words, "AGREEMENT".

All materials are available to members on DataBasin.org, and general information is available on the Dinkey Collaborative website, www.fs.usda.gov/goto/sierra/dinkeycollaborative *For questions please contact the facilitator, Mr. Dorian Fougeres, at dfougeres@ccp.csus.edu or (916) 531-3835.*

Action Items

1. **Rich** to circulate the information regarding the Southern California Edison public event.
2. **Dorian** to send the charter to Mr. Ron Goode and Mr. Joe Kaminski.
3. **Stan** to gather information regarding the Sierra Institute's grant for the Collaborative to consider signing a letter of support.
4. **Rebecca and Pam** to circulate the tri-fold brochure for member review.
5. **Mosé** to send the members the spreadsheet of Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment standards & guidelines.
6. **Dorian** to distribute the slides from the meeting presentations.
7. **All Members** to recommend to Mosé technical references for wildlife habitat desired conditions.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin, Deputy District Ranger, High Sierra Ranger District (HSRD), Sierra National Forest (SNF), welcomed all participants to the full Collaborative meeting and reviewed the agenda. Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) Facilitator, reviewed the meeting ground rules and future meeting dates and field visits (no full meeting on June 20, but field visit on June 19).

General Announcements

- Public tour of the Southern California Edison prescribed burn at Shaver Lake on June 8, 2013. For more information and to sign up, please contact 559-841-3194.
  AGREEMENT: The Dinkey Collaborative to co-sponsor the Southern California Edison event.
  ACTION ITEM: **Rich Bagley** to circulate the information regarding the Southern California Edison public event.
- The Collaborative will also host a public field visit on July 19. Depending on public interest, the Collaborative may hold another public open house in the fall; numerous members expressed interest in this.

New Charter Signatories

- The facilitator asked if anyone attending the meeting wanted to sign the charter that the group approved in February, since this was the first time the group had met in person again. The Honorable Ron Goode, Chair of the North Fork Mono Tribe, and Mr. Joe Kaminski, affiliated with the Backcountry Horsemen and Fresno 4WD, verbally adopted the charter.
  ACTION ITEM: **Dorian** to send the charter to Mr. Ron Goode and Mr. Joe Kaminski.

2. Orientation

- **Review of Priority Goals for 2013 Work**
  - The preferred alternative for Bald Mountain project is currently being revised by ID team. The team is working to address all areas of outstanding concern.
- **Landscape Planning Work Group Charge**
  - The work group's charge was to develop a process and structure for identifying and prioritizing potential general area locations. This includes:
    - Identifying a range of characteristics/research for reference conditions.
    - Gaining the full Collaborative Group's feedback.
    - Once process is in place, note the potential to share the process with other collaborative groups.
- **5 Guiding Questions**
  - The work group sought to answer five overarching questions.
  - WHAT WOULD BE THE RANGE OF CONDITIONS UNDER NATURAL PROCESSES?
    - Assess what would the Dinkey looked like today if human activitie did not take place, for example logging.

        - Consider information gathered and shared by the Monitoring Work Group.
    - WHAT IS THE LANDSCAPE LEVEL GUIDANCE?
        - Review the Land and Resource Management Plan, adhere to the rules to the plan, and if there is data that strays away from the plan, how does the group identify site conditions for guidance.
    - WHAT IS THE RANGE OF CURRENT CONDITIONS?
        - Assess the current conditions, and focus on a desired range (develop metrics).
    - WHAT LANDSCAPE UNITS SHOW THE GREATEST DEPARTURES FROM THE NATURAL RANGE OF CONDITIONS?
        - How the previous questions play out, and the various interpretations of the data.
        - Note some contradictory data (e.g., stand density can be interpreted differently depending on the objective).
    - WHERE ARE THE NEXT POTENTIAL GENERAL PROJECT AREAS?
        - With all the previous questions answered, members can review potential general project areas.
    - Questions/Comments:
        - Current vs. "Natural"/Reference conditions:
            - Current conditions are based on data from the landscape.
            - Natural conditions are based on applied metrics from published literature.
            - Assumptions were made based on site aspect.
            - Since "natural" has many meanings, prefer to use the term reference conditions instead.
        - Forest Scales:
            - Incorporation of many scales when discussing conditions. How to choose indicators and the ranges was hard work.
            - The group focused on the Dinkey Landscape, based on bioregional and forest-level data. This is the same that is being used in the Forest Plan Revision process.
- **Effort to Make all Assumptions Explicit**
    - To advance understanding transparency, the Work Group worked to document assumptions and decisions made, which are included in today's presentation.
- **2004 Framework as Foundation and Guide**
    - Consider the role of the land management plan and amendments: although there are some areas of concern, the group agreed to use this as the foundation of planning.
    - The group agreed that the potential to seek plan amendments should not be the driving force.
- **"Landscape" as Content-Dependent Term:**

- Apply the term to the Dinkey landscape, which would be assumed as across the whole 154,000 acres.
- Landscape planning requires working at multiple scales.
- Understand that assumptions change with scale and reference conditions.
- COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
    - The process should be completed by the summer to allow time to gather initial field data. (July meeting will have potential locations identified)
    - Concern for the term "condition" having a negative connotation, and suggest identifying indicators for a healthy forest as a whole.
        - Conditions are to be not taken as positive or negative, but as a starting point because it could be positive for one issue and or negative regarding another. (e.g., tree mortality can be noted as positive or negative depending on the perspective)
    - Regarding cultural resources:
        - Cultural resources, including but not limited to food resources, are missing from the categories and indicators. This needs to be addressed.
        - Cultural resources are linked not only to how people and animals use the forest, but to watershed health, with things like the maintenance of soil moisture. For example, burning allows the root system to stay intact and hold water, and promotes watershed resiliency.

3. Landscape Process and Disturbances

- Disturbances at the landscape scale and GTR 220 as topographical foundation:
    - Used approach to slope and aspect from GTR 220.
    - Macro-scale was the starting point for analysis. The group noted the major disturbances in the landscape (e.g. fire), and will work to restore this landscape process.
    - COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
        - Concerns in regards to the question: what is forest health?
        - The GTR 220 approach shows an area's productivity (i.e. poor soil contains trees with less productivity), moisture, and aspects.
        - Scale as a key factor in how outcomes are analyzed. These are taken into consideration when discussing indicators in the work group.
        - Note the forest diagram does not accurately display the true flow of rivers on the Dinkey landscape, which run east-west not north-south. The actual planning will be accurate in terms of the direction of flows.
        - Cultural considerations for indicators should be identified. (Examples of treatments were small cultural burns for food).

4. Indicator Categories, Indicators, and Current Condition

- **Four Categories and indicators as High-Level "Screens"**
    - Originally there 13 indicators, but lack of information and quantifiable usable data, or the inability to craft the indicator in a way that was meaningful for landscape analysis, narrowed the indicators.
    - Indicators and categories would quantify current and reference conditions, then compare it them with change from the referenced conditions.
    - Add cultural values to the indicators beneficial to the other indicators as well.
    - Categories and indicators are neutral: depending on values and application, a given indicator could show something beneficial or not.

1. **STAND DENSITY**
    - Definition includes # of trees, basal area, and volume per unit area. (Basal area a useful measurement).
        - Publications were referenced for "natural" conditions for the basal area ranges.
    - Langsaeter's (1941) graph displayed the way to manage the range of basal area on the landscape. It revealed how it would relate to future growth.
    - HOW DO YOU APPLY THE INFORMATION; Application of the table developed for Dinkey North and South.
        - The Aspects, forest types, site index
        - The combination of the site quality, forest type, and GTR220.
        - The matrix numbers are used as the reference condition.
        - Revisions regarding Red Fir and Oak Woodland would be included; Teakettle and the work by Malcolm North would be a point of reference.
        - The existing conditions would be compared to the table.
    - COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
        - Density impacts the watershed. The higher basal area, the higher consumption of water. How to consider this issue when considering total forest health?
        - Note older trees (over 150 years) were not taken into account because there is a lack of information.
        - 311 plots were taken through the Mixed Conifer from Lassen Peak to Kern County. The Ponderosa Pine information was from the entire U.S.; the Red Fir information is only from California.

2. **SERAL STAGE**
    - Geography heavily influenced the type of stages on the landscape, and a variety exists throughout Dinkey, which indicate a distribution of food, prey, and vegetation diversity.
    - Goals: identify habitat and heterogeneity at different scales. (Shown through the habitat diversity table, CWHR types, as applied to GIS polygons.) Rely on plot data and remote sensing data to compare diversity/heterogeneity in different units.

- Revisions could be done in forest types less than 20% cover (assumptions about rock outcrops), and open area with high level snags, for early seral stage.
- High level approach that reviews a broad spectrum of species management.
- COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
    - Regarding low elevation areas, single generation plantations are taken into consideration; however, oak woodlands have not size data (only hardwood data available), which is a weakness in information.
    - Note that the work group is focusing on the high-level and then making choices as they refine the scale.
    - Species indicators were not expanded to the Management Indicator Species because they just wanted to focus on the diversity of wildlife habitat. The narrative could discuss the suite of species that aids the seral stage.
    - Connectivity could be encouraged in the seral stage and/or in the fisher indicator.

3. FISHER

- More information is needed from Kathryn Purcell and Craig Thompson to inform the fisher den and habitat projection models.
- Opportunity to connect with the Monitoring Work Group to work out the desired conditions for fisher.
- Note the LiDAR information cannot be funded for connectivity.
    - Other ways to find connectivity and use other metrics.
    - Dr. Wayne Spencer, Conservation Biology Institute, might be able to to aid in gathering the necessary information.

4. PINE

- Review the percentage of pine per stand. Noted in the GTR 220, there is a lack of pine, and pine is important to wildlife.
- Dunning and Reineke studies show that historically forests had more pine than current conditions indicate. Currently firs dominate due to their rapid seed spread aided by the more recent fire suppression.
- Reference conditions are needed.
- This indicator is important to species composition, and fire resiliency.
- Pines for consideration: Gray Pine, Jeffrey Pine (higher elevations), Ponderosa Pine, and Sugar Pine.
- The pines are to be established, though not at the expense of large trees (live or dead) because the large structure is needed in the forest.
- It was noted that percentage of pine per stand was related to fire regime and intensity, and these interrelationships were important to track.

5. FIRE RETURN INTERVAL

- Overall the Dinkey landscape needs fir. The last 50 years of fire return data was reviewed.

- Difference between fire return interval and fire rotation was discussed and differentiated. Fire rotation has less available data. Becker and Taylor (2001) provided a definition of the fire rotation.
    - **Fire Rotation**: time needed for an entire study area to burn, given the size and extent of individual fires that are smaller than the total area.
    - **Fire return interval**: a measure of the duration between fires in a particular spot.
- Rotation better displays where the fire returns on a particular landscape in a larger scale (not just a time factor). Can be looked at through severity fire types and the slope and aspect.
- Data is collected through fire scars. Most historical averages are shaped by fire repression in an area.

6. FIRE INTENSITY

- Considered more than flame length because a low intensity fire can burn for a long duration and create more damage; intensity and duration are factors.
- Site aspect can affect the intensity.
- Focus on sites that have the most need/impact.
- COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
    - Focus is on current conditions where fire is likely to occur on the landscape.
    - Historical data was taken into account.
    - Difference between fire intensity and severity: Fire intensity refers to the fire while it is burning, and fire severity is the effect of the fire after one year. Note severity tends to be the main focus.
    - Identify the highest severity rates, and note the intensity. (Calculated through FVS modeling)

7. LARGE TREES

- Focused on trees and snags over 30" DBH, key species, and dens/nests. (Note hardwoods need different ranges.)
- Note the importance of establishing medium size trees to establish future large trees.
- The definition refers to volume per acre, so scale and variation are important issues.
- The important quality of a large tree is its potential to support animal use and association with late seral stage vegetation.

8. SNAGS

- Note that the snags have different densities on the landscape.
- The desired conditions can be species specific. There is particular information for the density needs.
- Review snags across the whole landscape. A per acre average does not capture the existence of clumps of snags or varied distribution.
- The resource management plan does not offer guidance, so focus on the literature to address the snag density.

9. **EQUIVALENT ROADED ACRES**
    - The definition of an Equivalent Roaded Acre, provided by Alan Gallegos, Soils Program Manager, Sierra National Forest, is:
        - The Equivalent Road Acre (ERA) is a unit of measurement, based on a comparison of one acre of road, used to describe land use disturbances in a Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE) analysis. ERA's are used in the CWE ERA Model as an accounting system to describe disturbances in a watershed.
    - The ERA as an indicator helps get at concerns about soil types and water quality impacts at a landscape level.
    - The upper limit is 14% (i.e., 14% was a paved over road), less than the 4% is no concern, 4-10% is moderate concern, and 10% is high concern.
        - These ranges overlap and need to be separated.
    - Roads are not the only source of compaction. Trails can also cause this. The model includes trails and roads, and Trails can be an issue due to compaction, but all areas are included in the model's outcome.
    - Model clears up sensitivity of soil types and water quality issues.
    - Mr. Alan Gallegos from the Forest Service stated:
        - Equivalent Roaded Acres (ERAs) are a measurement of watershed disturbance in the land management plan.
        - Any watershed disturbance is equated to roads (the worst disturbance). Thinning impacts are typically .15% or lower.
        - The impact is estimated over a 30 year period.
    - When examining watershed impacts, one should take into account all factors that are associated with disturbance (e.g., soil compaction, soil types, water quality, timber removal, and fire).
    - Consider changing the indicator term to "watershed disturbance" rather than ERA, to help communicate that there are many possible sources of watershed distribute, not only roads.
    - In regards to a prescription, what are the risks associated with burn?
        - Mr. Gallegos replied that one would identity the soils condition (sensitivity), erosion, impact on aquatics, and water quality. The ERA model would be used to frame management decisions.
    - If needed, a webinar could be held to explain the ERA assessment process in more detail.

5. General Updates

- **Project Updates**
    - The Hazlett Underburn was a success
    - Logging started in Eastfork
    - Marking is ongoingin Soaproot
    - The field season is in full swing
    - Kaiser Pass has opened

- Campgrounds have opened

- **Regional Collaborative Advisory Group**
  - Mr. Stan Van Velsor indicated that interested remained in forming an association between the three Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects in California, however, no progress has been made on this in recent months.
    - It will be important to clarify goals and how the groups will work together before an association is formed.
  - Consider reviewing other regional groups of CFLRs as an example for California.
- **CFLR Funding**
  - Originally the expected funding was $955,000, but initial funds were approximately $300,000.
  - Mr. Jones-Yellin was optimistic that a larger amount of funding would be made available. Optimism expressed with gaining more funding from the regional office.
- **Monitoring Announcements**
  - Socioeconomic Assessment:
    - The Sierra Institute started working with the sub-group of the Monitoring Work Group.
    - They identified stakeholders, and the next steps are to conduct the interviews and schedule a workshop to lay out the proposed indicators.
    - COMMENTS:
      - Consider the opportunity to work with other organizations (e.g., National Forest Foundation and the RCD Council) by conducting an opinion poll in the community.
      - The Sierra Institute is submitting a grant on June 30, 2013, and there is potential funding for socioeconomic programs.
      - **ACTION ITEM**: Mr. Stan Van Velsor to gather information regarding the Sierra Institute's grant for the Collaborative to consider signing a letter of support.
  - May 2 Desired Conditions Monitoring Workshop:
    - Presenters featured were Craig Thompson, John Keane, and Kathryn Purcell on the subjects of Pacific Fisher, Forest Sensitive Raptors, and Non-Sensitive Avian Species.
    - The completed draft of the desired conditions should be available by the middle of June/July.
    - The effort overlaps with the Landscape Planning Work Group. The efforts need to be coordinated and information to be shared.
- **Community Outreach**
  - Edison public field visit Saturday June 8, 2013.
  - Dinkey public field trip July 19, 2013.
  - The group reviewed the draft tri-fold brochure revised by Ms. Rebecca Garcia, and the members are to suggest any revisions. A large format, single-page brochure is also being developed.
  - Note that in the works is a larger brochure with a single page front and back.

- **ACTION ITEM**: **Rebecca and Pam** to circulate the tri-fold brochure for member review.
- Plan to have a flyer for the July 19th event.
- There is interest in hosting another open house event, and a sub-committee should be formed after the July event. Dates could be August or September. The date should be coordinated with large summer events, rather than being held after the summer visitors have gone home.

- **Member announcements**
  - Activities in other collaborative groups:
    - Sierra Resource Conservation District submitted an application to look at the feasibility of heat and power in Eastern Fresno County.
    - Bass Lake District and Willow Creek Collaborative obtained a conditional use permit for Biomass plant in the Northfork.
    - Administration of the Sustainable Forest Collaborative (SFCC) will now be done by Sierra Resources Conservation District.
    - It was suggested that, given the language in the Dinkey Charter, members of the Collaborative who have concerns about parallel projects, or who are going to apply for related grants, should use the Collaborative as a way to share information and address concerns proactively.

6. Land Management Plan Guidance and Constraints

Mr. Jones-Yellin reviewed the handout with the members briefly. The map grouped together major restrictions on the landscape, such as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), Protected Activity Centers (PACs, for Spotted Owls, Great Gray Owl, and Goshawk) and fishers, aquatic habitats, and waterways and streams. These areas showed overlapping and competing interests on the landscape.

ACTION ITEM: **Mosé** to send the members the spreadsheet of Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment standards & guidelines.

7. The Dinkey Landscape in 2013: Preliminary Results of Comparing Current and Reference Conditions

Mr. Ramiro Rojas, District Silviculturalist, presented the methodology of the current and reference conditions. He noted that they have worked through five indicators.

- **Reference Basal Area**
  - Potential Natural Vegetation (PNV, meaning the vegetation as it relates to geomorphology, aspect, soils) shows what the land can support, including if there were a disturbance.
  - Polygons were created of approximately 800 acres by different forest types and then by basal areas.

- The landscape was divided by aspect, zone, and site with ranges displayed. Each range had a particular zone, productivity, and range of basal area associated with it.
- Existing conditions without any treatment and with previous treatments were mapped to allow comparisons. The reference is the indicator associated with the PNV range.
- Identified the departure from the reference condition, including the existing conditions with treatments, and existing conditions without treatments.
- COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
  - Regarding the current percentage, treatment signs are noted when a metric falls above or below the reference range.
  - Different issues raise different concerns on where a value falls in the reference range. (i.e., snag creation might be an option at a higher basal area)
  - In order to create an effective treatment, the group must review the total picture.

- **Average Trees Per Acre 10" and up**
  - Trees under 10" are ephemeral, so are left out.
  - High basal area needs to be calculated in relation to stand density, since it could be created by a few large trees or many small trees, and these are different conditions.
  - COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS:
    - Reference studies (i.e. Taylors 2008) for ranges associated with fires.
    - Regional data on historic fires is being used.

      ACTION ITEM **Dorian** to distribute the slides from the meeting presentations.

8. Next steps

- Landscape Planning Work Group to meet for two days in June. (June 20-21, 2013). The group will:
  - Refine the approach based on comments by members today.
  - Identify areas with the highest departures from the reference metrics, and 2-5 potential general project area locations.
  - The Work Group will present these to the group in July, including a recommended approach to prioritization.
  - Review the accomplishments of past projects as visible on the landscape.
  - Create a roads and trails overlay.
- The July 17-18 meeting dates may involve one field visit and one full Collaborative meeting, or two full Collaborative meetings.
- Regarding reference conditions for wildlife habitat, the Landscape Work Group would like members to send information/studies that would be applicable in creating a reference conditions.

  ACTION ITEM: **All Members** to recommend to Mosé technical references for wildlife habitat desired conditions.

9. Attendees

1. Chip Ashley
2. Justin Augustine
3. Rich Bagley
4. Sue Britting
5. Narvell Conner
6. Kent Duysen
7. Larry Duysen
8. Brittany Dyer
9. Dan Fidler
10. Pam Flick
11. Dorian Fougères, CCP
12. Gabriela Golik, CCP
13. Ron Goode
14. Stan Harger
15. Steve Haze
16. Andy Hosford
17. Mosé Jones-Yellin, FS
18. Joe Kaminski
19. Justine Reynolds
20. Susan Roberts
21. Ramiro Rojas, FS
22. Greg Schroer, FS
23. Mark Smith
24. John Stewart
25. Craig Thomas
26. Craig Thompson
27. Mandy Vance
28. Stan Van Velsor